

Realising Service Co-creation through Social Media: A Nonprofits' Perspective

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Information Systems)

under the supervision of Dr. Kyeong Kang and Prof. Ghassan
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February 2020

Certificate of Authorship

I, Fatuma Namisango declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Professional Practice and Leadership in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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22nd February 2020

Acknowledgement

First, I thank the Almighty Allah for giving me health, strength, knowledge and the opportunity to do a PhD, Alhamdulillah. Second, I am very grateful to my mother, Ms Hajara Ndayidde, for her full support, which made this journey a lot easier. My deep gratitude to my father, Mr Haruna Bwogi, who believed in me, but did not live to see me complete this study, may his soul rest in peace. I am very grateful to Uncle Adam W. Kakembo and his family in Melbourne who have made my stay in Australia worthwhile – You have supported me a lot, thank you.

My sincere thanks to Rukia, Milber, and Patrick for coming to my rescue when I needed their help. I am also very grateful to my kids, Suha and Sana for waiting and being patient for a very long time. Thanks to all my sisters and brothers for their encouragement and humour. Many thanks to Hajji Rashid W.S. for his companionship, patience and support.

Many thanks to my supervisor Dr Kyeong Kang and co-supervisor Prof. Ghassan Beydoun, for their ideas, insights and guidance. Profound gratitude to my fellow students and friends at UTS – Tsholofelo Sethibe and Diah Priharsari, I have learnt a lot from you. Finally, I am very grateful to the UTS Graduate Research School for offering me the IRS and UTSP scholarships that have enabled me to accomplish this study.



Publications from this Dissertation

Conference Papers

1. Namisango, F., Kang, K. and Rehman, J. (2020). Organisational Generativity, Social Media and the Co-creation of Nonprofit Services: A Sociomateriality Perspective, *Proceedings of the 53rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-53)*, Jan 7 – 10, 2020; Maui, Hawaii, USA. [Among Best Paper Nominations in the track of Digital and Social Media]
2. Namisango, F., Kang, K. and Rehman, J. (2019). Generative nonprofits will co-create services using social media platforms, *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Information Systems Development (ISD)*, Aug 28 – 30, 2019, Toulon France.
3. Namisango, F. and Kang, K. (2019). What do we know about social media in nonprofits? A Review, *Proceedings of the Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS2019)* July 8 – 12, 2019, Xi'an, China.
4. Namisango, F. and Kang, K. (2018). Social Media, Organisation-community relationships and co-creation: A Case of Nonprofit Organisations, *Proceedings of America's Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS)* August 14 – 16, 2018, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States.
5. Namisango, F. and Kang, K. (2017). A Typology of Knowledge Co-creation in Social Networks, *Proceedings of Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS)*, December 4 – 6, 2017, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.

Journal Papers

6. Namisango, F., Kang, K. and Beydoun, G. (2020). How the Structures provided by Social Media enable Collaborative Outcomes. A Study of Service Co-Creation in Nonprofits, *Information Systems Frontiers*, Vol. xxx, Iss. xxx [Forthcoming]
7. Namisango, F. and Kang, K. (2019). Organisation-Public Relationships on Social Media: The Role of Relationship Strength, Cohesion and Symmetry, *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 101, Issue. 2019, pp. 22-29.

Abstract

Central to our inquiry is how nonprofit organisations (nonprofits) realise service co-creation using social media. Extant literature reveals that nonprofits are increasingly adopting and using social media to mobilise and integrate resources through online donations, event invites, volunteering, and attracting informational and social support. The increase in nonprofit-public interaction on social media has become a resourcing practice and functional strategy for supporting nonprofits' funding models through collaborative practices such as service co-creation. Some studies, although still very few, have acknowledged the possibilities for nonprofit service co-creation on social media; but none provides a conceptualisation and operationalisation of service co-creation. In this regard, there is a lack of insight on two issues, which, if addressed, could enhance our understanding of how nonprofits realise service co-creation through social media. The first issue is *what* forms of service co-creation do nonprofits realise through social media; and the second is *how* social media interactions contribute to the observed forms of service co-creation.

Drawing on the adaptive structuration theory (AST) and perspectives on technology affordances and organisation-public relationships, we generate *a priori* propositions on how nonprofits realise service co-creation through social media. First, because co-creation is multidimensional and varies by context, we maintain that nonprofits realise multiple forms of service co-creation through social media defined by the nature of their services. Second, because social media creates a platform for public participation in nonprofit services, we argue that the emergent structures of social media (i.e., possibilities for action, meaning and values conveyed) and the structures of organisation-public interaction (OPI) (i.e., the types of relationships and patterns of interaction) provide the mechanisms for service co-creation. Lastly, the actor's capabilities are critical in understanding these structures; therefore, we conceptualise the emergence of a new capability as organisation generativity. We suggest that organisational generativity, i.e., the ability to rejuvenate, procreate and act in new ways to challenge the status quo, explains the emergent structures in the realisation of service co-creation on social media.

We conducted a convergent mixed-methods study to identify and explain the generative capabilities and mechanisms for service co-creation on social media, based on the perspectives of managers and social media personnel in nonprofits. We integrate findings from 289 survey

responses and 19 semi-structured interviews from multiple case studies. Our findings reveal the forms of service co-creation realised by nonprofits through social media, explain the mechanisms provided by social media and OPI for service co-creation, and the generative capabilities for realising social media opportunities, OPI and service co-creation.

Our findings suggest that nonprofits realise seven (7) forms of service co-creation through social media, including co-resourcing, co-advocating, co-assessing, co-ideating, co-progressing, co-experiencing, and co-diagnosing. This study also found that social media contributes to service co-creation in three ways. First, social media offers action possibilities, conveys meaning and promotes values surrounding its functionality that facilitate OPI and allow nonprofits to realise service co-creation. Second, OPI on social media embodies discernible relationships and patterns of interaction that will allow service co-creation. Third, organisations build generative capabilities, including learning, adaptiveness, digital spanning, and relationability to actualise social media opportunities, facilitate OPI, and realise service co-creation.

This study contributes to academic knowledge by providing mechanism-based explanations (MBEs) for collaborative outcomes on social media. We operationalise service co-creation as a collaborative outcome for nonprofits on social media. First, we derive the measures for service co-creation on social media. Then, we provide a model for realising service co-creation on social media, which identifies the mechanisms provided in the structures of social media and OPI that facilitate service co-creation. Additionally, we conceptualise the emergence of organisational generativity as an organisational capability for social media interaction and explain its role in enabling the structures of social media, OPI, and collaborative outcomes, such as service co-creation.

For nonprofit practitioners, we explain the value of social media by identifying organisational outcomes associated with the use of social media and the facilitating factors that should be recognised. We highlight the variations of service co-creation, which can be useful in evaluating service co-creation practices on social media. Overall, the study guides nonprofits towards identifying and utilising the opportunities offered by social media as well as building capabilities, relationships, and patterns of interaction sufficient for service co-creation.

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Abbreviations

ACAP	Absorptive Capacity
AITs	Advanced Information Technologies
AST	Adaptive Structuration Theory
CR	Critical Realism
ESO	Education Services Organisations
FASM	Functional Affordances of Social Media
GEN	Organisational Generativity
HSO	Health Services Organisations
IS	Information Systems
MBEs	Mechanism-Based Explanations
Nonprofits	Nonprofit Organisations
OPI	Organisation-Public Interaction
OPR	Organisation Public Relationship
POI	Patterns of Interaction
QUAL	Qualitative
QUAN	Quantitative
SCC	Service Co-creation
SESM	Symbolic Expressions of Social Media
SMS	Social Media Structure
SSO	Social Services Organisations
TACT	Technology Affordances and Constraints Theory
TOR	Type of Relationship